1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

691 421 partition of a father's property when a son sets up house for himself, but although he can press for his share, it is felt by the community to be against tribal spirit, rather than unfilial. When, on the other hand, a father had outraged tribal feelings by seducing his sons' wives and driving his sons from his house, his refusal to let his sons have any share in the family property was considered by the Bison-horn Marias an additional justification for his subsequent murder by his sons.

691 428 768 There is so little domestic property of great value among the Hill Marias, and so many of a man's few tools and possessions, as we have seen, are buried with him, that inheritance disputes about movable property are almost unknown. Though among the Bison-horn Marias less is buried or burned with the dead, the remaining movable property generally passes with the house; if the elder sons have set up separate establishments in their father's lifetime they will have equipped themselves with the few possessions they need, and will not worry about the younger brother appropriating what their father has left. Women's ornaments generally are buried or burned with them.

428 When the inheritance includes valuable rice-lands, they remain generally the joint property of the sons and brother's sons, and the father's surviving brothers, the eldest son generally nominally being the manager, though he will certainly have to give way to an uncle or younger brother or cousin if he is inefficient, weak-minded or deformed. The produce will be stored in his granary, but shared among the members of the family.

428 736 587 Daughters and sisters have no right of inheritance of their father's or brothers' lands or property. For the land is really the land of the clan, and the daughters and sisters will on marriage have passed to the clans of their husbands. A widow is entitled only to maintenance, and as on her husband's death she very often becomes the wife of his younger brother, she gets her maintenance as a matter of course; if he leaves no younger brother and she does not marry again, she lives on in her late husband's house and works with other women of the family, and is maintained by their husbands. A girl whose parents die before she is married frequently goes to a married sister's house and becomes a co-wife.

562 For a woman on the whole is a kind of property, or a valuable adjunct to the house and family. For her, the husband's family has had to pay a bride-price that is a severe tax on its resources[1]; or else, where cross-cousin marriage prevails,[2] she represents the repayment of a debt incurred when her father took his bride from

[1] See pp. 248-50 and 252-3 above.
[2] See pp. 234 and 247 above.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the family and clan to which she goes as a bride. She may elope with another man, but he must compensate the first husband. She must work for her husband, having his meals ready in the home or taking them to him in the field when he wants them, gathering forest fruits and roots, and doing her appointed work in the fields; many a woman has paid with her life by exasperating her tired husband by not having his food ready or by cooking it badly. She is not a full human being like a man. She is taboo when menstruating; she may not sleep in the field when the crops are ripening; she is debarred from attending at the festivals and *pandum*; she has no special dancing dress. Yet with all this she has not too bad a position. As a girl she has considerable freedom both in premarital sexual life and in the choice of a husband, and she is fairly free to leave her husband if he ill-treats her, or if he cannot beget a child. Tribal sentiment strongly condemns wife-beating. Her natural taste for ornament is given full scope, her parents gradually collecting beads and metal neck and arm rings, her boy-companion presenting her with beads and carved hair-combs, and her husband when she is married recognizing her right to spend a few of the scanty pice she earns from the sale of her basketry at the bazaar on simple trinkets. She participates in the tribal dances and songs, though not in the religious ceremonies that accompany them. In fact her position *vis-a-vis* her husband is far freer than that of the ordinary Hindu wife. Above all, she is not exposed to the evil of child marriage and premature motherhood, of which habits of their Hindu neighbours Maria headmen will speak with abhorrence.

Such in brief and imperfect outline are the main principles governing tribal law and custom, and the main features of the old village and tribal headman and *panchayat* organization. No attempt has been made in this chapter to draw any clear-cut distinction between the ways of the Hill and the Bison-horn Marias; in actual practice both treat such matters in much the same way, the main distinctions being (*a*) that the primitive clan organization is stronger and the authority of the headmen more limited by that of elders among the Hill Marias, and (*b*) that the Bison-horn Maria has been more in contact with the outer Hindu world than the Hill Maria.

The recent State Order restoring jurisdiction to Panchayats

Under the State Order framed in 1932 by my successor, the regular criminal courts of the State have been deprived of jurisdiction over the primitive tribes in cases of certain public nuisances, simple hurt and assault, thefts (except of cattle), of property worth Rs. 5 or less, mischief, trespass, house-trespass, bigamy, adultery and

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE CRIMES OF WOMEN

I

674 171 It is notorious that women are everywhere less criminal than men. 'The proportion varies, however, greatly in different countries. In France it is usually about 4 to 1; in the United States it is about 12 to 1; in Italy and Spain the proportion of women is very small. In Great Britain, on the other hand, the proportion of criminal women is extremely large, especially for the greater crimes'.[1] In Bastar the proportion is 23 men to 1 woman.

674 Havelock Ellis points out that woman is protected from crime by certain physical and psychological characteristics—her physical weakness, sexual selection, domestic seclusion, prostitution, and maternity. Among Maria women, however, the only one of these forms of protection to operate is maternity. The women are often of considerable physical strength and are as capable of striking a murderous blow with an axe as are the men. Since every Maria woman is married, sexual selection is of no assistance in removing from the place of danger and temptation the more degenerate and abnormal types.

462 562 As far as the domestic seclusion of women is concerned, the Maria situation resembles that in the Baltic provinces of Russia of former days, where the women shared the occupations of men and the level of feminine criminality was comparatively high. In England also, which has taken the lead in enlarging the sphere of women's work, 'the level of feminine criminality has for half a century been rising'. The Maria woman is not only free to assist her husband in the tasks of daily life, but she also frequently participates in those very occasions which are regarded as most provocative to murder, the drinking parties when large quantities of rice-beer are consumed. [598] There is no prostitution among the Maria. But on the other hand women do not, as in Europe, fall out of the social ranks.

[1] Havelock Ellis, op. cit., pp. 261 f.

[p. 161]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

674 For the Maria (as for the European woman) maternity
562 is the great protection. The reason for the low incidence of homicide among Maria women is possibly connected with the strong aboriginal belief that it is supernaturally dangerous for a woman to take life. This is the ultimate reason why there are no women priests, for the priest has to offer sacrifice. Maria women are not supposed to kill goats or even chickens. They are not permitted to join in hunting. The only pursuit of the kind which is not taboo to them is fishing—but fish are cold-blooded creatures.

762 It will be noted, however, that the number of Maria women who commit suicide is almost as high as that of Maria men.

II

674 Five of the 100 homicides were committed by women, and in one of them the woman was helped by a man. Two of these were typical women's crimes arising out of annoyance and exasperation over comparatively small matters. In the first two women, both of whom had been married to the same man and were now widows, were living together. The older widow was so tiresome and so continually nagged the younger that at last the girl could stand it no longer, and gave her three blows with an axe whereon she died. In the second, a man and his wife were collecting red ants for food when they heard the cries of a child in extremity. They went to the place and found a little girl about ten years old lying on the ground with her neck broken. She had been killed by her step-mother for not doing what she was told. The older woman had climbed up a tree and was picking the leaves and throwing them down. She called to the child and asked her to bring her basket closer so that she could drop the leaves directly into it. When the child disobeyed, her step-mother came down from the tree and beat and kicked her, then twisted her neck till she died. Both the older woman and the girl were weak and hungry for want of food. There was no rice in their house and they had been living on mahua for days. Fatigue and hunger played their part in this tragedy, as so often happens.